

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 1037

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, GR, TU
SUB: GREEK-TURKISH PROBLEMS: DISCUSSION WITH BITSIOS

REF: A) ATHENS 955, B) ATHENS 672

1. IN MY DISCUSSION LAST NIGHT WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
BITSIOS (SEPTELS - NOTAL) I ASKED HIM HOW HIS WEEKEND
MEETING WITH CAGLAYANGIL IN STRASBOURG HAD GONE. HE
SAID IT WAS VERY REVEALING, THAT HE HAD NOW BEGUN TO
SEE THE MAIN OUTLINES OF THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT'S
"PLAN" FOR DEALING WITH ITS INTERNATIONAL AND
DOMESTIC PROBLEMS BETWEEN NOW AND THE TURKISH ELECTIONS.
THE "PLAN" IN ESSENCE SEEMED TO HIM TO HAVE TWO MAIN
CHARACTERISTICS: 1) TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION TO THE
WORLD--AND ESPECIALLY TO THE USG--THAT TURKEY WAS
REASONABLE, MODERATE, CONCILIATORY AND FULL OF GOODWILL AS FAR AS
CYPRUS AND OTHER GREEK-TURKISH PROBLEMS WERE CONCERNED, AND 2)
TO MAKE NO REAL CONCESSIONS OR COMPROMISES ON SUBSTANCE WHATSOEVER.

2. FOR EXAMPLE, BITSIOS SAID, HIS IMPORTANT MEETING WITH CAGLAYANGIL
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IN STRASBOURG WAS THE MOST CORDIAL EVER, THE "ATMOSPHERE WAS
EXCELLENT", BUT THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY "NO PROGRESS". CAGLAYANGIL
REPEATEDLY STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS
AND REPEATEDLY ASSURED BITSIOS OF THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE
TO NEGOTIATE CONSTRUCTIVELY ON ALL OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS AND
PROBLEMS. CAGLAYANGIL REFERRED TO "THE PROGRESS" MADE IN THE
MAKARIOS-DENKTASH MEETING LAST THURSDAY AND INDICATED HE WAS

OPTIMISTIC THAT "FURTHER PROGRESS" WOULD BE POSSIBLE SOON. AT THE SAME TIME, BITSIOS SAID, WHEN THEY GOT DOWN TO SPECIFICS THERE WAS SIMPLY NO GIVE AT ANY POINT ON ANY OF THE PREVIOUS TURKISH POSITIONS.

3. ON THE PROBLEM OF REOPENING THE AIRSPACE OVER THE AEGEAN, FOR EXAMPLE, THE TWO SIDES HAVE BEEN VERY CLOSE. THE TURKS, HOWEVER, HAVE INSISTED THAT THERE BE NO DIRECT REFERENCE IN THEIR AGREEMENT TO ICAO PROVISIONS OR THE TERM FIR (FLIGHT INFORMATION REGION). BITSIOS SAID THAT TO HIS KNOWLEDGE THIS WOULD BE THE ONLY CASE IN THE WORLD OF AN AGREEMENT COVERING SUCH INTERNATIONAL AVIATION MATTERS THAT DID NOT INCLUDE SUCH A REFERENCE, BUT IN AN EFFORT TO BE ACCOMMODATING THE GOG DEVISED A WAY TO AVOID THE USE OF THE TERM "FIR" AND ANY DIRECT REFERENCE TO ICAO; HOWEVER, THE GOG FELT IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT THERE AT LEAST BE "AN INDIRECT" REFERENCE TO ICAO. CAGLAYANGIL REFUSED TO BUDGE, THE SITUATION IS AT AN IMPASSE, AND AEGEAN AIRSPACE REMAINS CLOSED.

4. ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF QUESTION, JOHN TZOUNIS HAD GONE TO LONDON OVER THE WEEKEND AND THE GREEK DELEGATION HAD ITS FIRST MEETING ON MONDAY, JANUARY 31ST, WITH THE TURKISH DELEGATION. HERE AGAIN, BITSIOS SAID, WAS A GOOD EXAMPLE. HE HAD RECEIVED A TELEGRAM FROM TZOUNIS TUESDAY MORNING SAYING THAT THE TURKISH REPRESENTATIVES WERE REFUSING TO PROCEED ON THE UNDERSTANDINGS AND PROCEDURE AGREED IN BERN TWO MONTHS AGO TO DISCUSS AND IDENTIFY APPLICABLE INTERNATIONAL PRECEDENTS ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD THAT WOULD BE USEFUL TO THE TWO DELEGATIONS IN PURSUING DISCUSSIONS OF THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROBLEM.

5. WITH RESPECT TO OTHER WORRISOME PROBLEMS IN THE AEGEAN,
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CAGLAYANGIL MADE A STRONG AND, IN SOME RESPECTS, THREATENING POINT TO BITSIOS TO THE EFFECT THAT HE (CAGLAYANGIL) AND OTHERS IN THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT WHO FAVORED DETENTE AND COOPERATION WITH GREECE WERE DOING THEIR BEST TO COPE WITH OPPOSITION AND CRITICAL ELEMENTS IN TURKEY, BUT HE COULD NOT GUARANTEE THAT THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER "PROVOCATIONS" OR TENSIONS CRATED IN THE AEGEAN DURING COMING MONTHS. BITSIOS SAID HE REMINDED CAGLAYANGIL OF THE AGREEMENT SIGNED IN BERN ON THIS POINT, BUT CAGLAYANGIL REPEATED THAT HE COULD NOT MAKE ANY COMMITMENT THAT THE TURKISH SEISMIC RESEARCH VESSEL WOULD NOT AT SOME POINT RESUME ITS RESEARCHES IN THE AEGEAN.

6. BITSIOS SAID, IN SUM, THAT HE WAS WORRIED. DESPITE THE ENCOURAGING AND CONCILIATORY THINGS THE TURKS WERE SAYING, HE DID NOT AT ALL ACCEPT THEM AT FACE VALUE OR BELIEVE IN THEIR SINCERITY. AS FAR AS CYPRUS WAS CONCERNED, "THEY HAVE A PLAN AND DENKTASH IS CARRYING IT OUT." BITSIOS SAID HE WAS NOT SUGGESTING THAT THE USG DO ANYTHING AT THIS TIME BUT HE DID WANT TO KEEP US FULLY AND CURRENTLY INFORMED ON DEVELOPMENTS, AND WANTED US TO HAVE HIS ASSESSMENT OF WHAT THEY MEANT.

7. COMMENT: AS USUAL, BITSIOS WAS ELOQUENT AND PERSUASIVE IN PRESENTING THE GREEK SIDE. IT ALSO OBVIOUSLY REMAINS A KEY ELEMENT IN GREEK STRATEGY TO TRY AND INFLUENCE ITS ALLIES--AND PARTICULARLY THE UNITED STATES--TO FOLLOW POLICIES TOWARDS TURKEY THAT REPRESENT A BLEND OF BOTH SCEPTICISM AND PRESSURE. HE SEEMED TO BE IMPLYING THAT A MAJOR CRUCH AND TEST OF NERVE BETWEEN THE U.S. AND TURKEY MAY LIE NOT TOO FAR AHEAD, AND FROM WHERE I SIT IN ATHENS I THINK HE MAY BE RIGHT.
KUBISCH

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